

VZCZCXRO6355
OO RUEHPA
DE RUEHAB #1241/01 3540719
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 200719Z DEC 07
FM AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3847
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABIDJAN 001241

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/18/2017
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [EAID](#) [MARR IV](#)
SUBJECT: SPECIAL REP BADINI OPTIMISTIC ABOUT OPA; FOCUS
SHIFTING TO ELECTION

Classified By: AMB. WANDA NESBITT FOR REASONS 1.4 (b/d)

¶1. (C) Summary: Ambassador discussed recent developments with the Ouagadougou Political Accord with the Facilitator,s special representative, Boureima Badini, on December 14. Badini confirmed that the complementary accords were meant to keep pressure on the parties, but said he was satisfied that Gbagbo and Soro both are doing what,s necessary to remove obstacles to progress. Badini believes Gbagbo is more confident now than he once was of his ability to win a presidential election and is now eager to have all the necessary elements in place. Hence his willingness to restructure the negotiating teams in a way that excludes Interior Minister Tagro. Badini was optimistic that the parties would meet the deadlines laid out in the complementary accords, including progress on DDR before the end of December. Ensuring that the identification process is carried out correctly remains key to the overall success of the OPA. End Summary

¶2. (C) Amb. Nesbitt and PolCouns called on Special Representative Badini to discuss the 2nd and 3rd complementary agreements to the OPA. Many read the 2nd complementary agreement as ratifying the decision to select SAGEM as the technical operator for the identification process, but Badini sees its significance as clarifying that SAGEM will be the primary operator. He confirmed that Interior Minister Tagro had wanted SAGEM to be subordinate to the National Institute of Statistics (Institut National de la Statistique - INS). The opposition parties strongly oppose this because INS Director General Matthieu Meleu is widely viewed as being solidly in the FPI/Gbagbo camp and the parties doubt he would ensure a fair process. Badini said Gbagbo,s camp wants to control the identification process because they are concerned about the potential for large numbers of northerners (non-Gbagbo supporters) to be added to the electoral rolls. The OPA, however, clearly gives the lead role to the technical operator; for the INS to supervise SAGEM would contravene the OPA. Badini seemed confident that the 2nd complementary accord settled the issue of SAGEM vs. the INS. Local media reports, however, continue to suggest otherwise. Embassy will keep a close eye on this issue.

¶3. (C) Regarding the specifics of the identification process, Badini said that SAGEM will start with the 2000 electoral list and set up offices (up to 11,000) around the country to register voters. He stressed that everyone on the electoral list, regardless of whether they currently have identification papers or not, will be required to appear at a SAGEM office and provide biometric data in order to be documented to vote in the next election. According to Badini, individuals who have received jugements suppletifs8 after going to an audience foraine will not be able to go directly to SAGEM to register. They will still need to get a certificate of nationality. (Comment: If accurate, this could be a huge point of contention. One of the main selling points of the audiences foraines was the

notion that individuals would be able to register to vote based solely on a document issued thru the audiences foraines. Birth certificates issued by an audience foraine will apparently be sufficient documentation to register.)

14. (C) Badini acknowledged that the opposition political parties have legitimate complaints about the 2000 electoral list having been tampered with. However, he believes they should concentrate more on getting their voters to be documented by SAGEM. Badini believes the political parties, especially the PDCI and FPI, have not paid attention to how their voters are affected by the identification process. They tend to think of it as a process that affects only those from the north and need to do a better job of mobilizing their constituents to register. Badini also expressed grave concern that the presidential election would be a very bitter campaign and would make the post-electoral period especially fragile. He said there is &real hatred8 among Gbagbo, Ouattara and Bedie, and that the latter in particular may go to great lengths to try to win. He thought the Forces Nouvelles would accept a Gbagbo victory as long as the identification process continued to operate but was concerned about how the militias in west would react to a result they didn,t like. Badini also wondered about Soro,s fate and thought it would facilitate reconciliation if Gbagbo kept him on as Prime Minister.

15. (C) Asked if he thought the parties were fully committed to the OPA, Badini said yes. He was also quite optimistic that they would meet most of the very ambitious deadlines in the 3rd complementary agreement. He saw a direct link between the government's willingness to pay rebel soldiers an as yet to be determined sum of money and the rebels' willingness to return control of customs and other revenue

ABIDJAN 00001241 002 OF 002

sources to the central government. In Badini's view, this is one of the most important elements of the 3rd complementary agreement as it gives both sides a strong incentive to follow through on their commitments. Badini also seemed confident that there would be progress on DDR before the end of the year. He believes that the parties are well on their way to resolving the ranks issue and said he would not be surprised if Forces Nouvelles (FN) officers were allowed to retain their ranks in exchange for agreeing to immediate retirement. Badini said that his office, UNOCI, and the French Licorne forces will observe the disarmament process to ensure it takes place and that he expects the Ivorian forces to supply him with a timeline for completion of the process as soon as they establish one.

16. (C) Badini,s optimistic view of the situation was based in large part on his assessment that President Gbagbo is now confident that he will win the election and is therefore ready to take action to remove obstacles to an election. He cited Gbagbo,s willingness to agree to PM Soro,s proposal that Ministers no longer be allowed to serve on the negotiating teams as an important sign of the President's commitment to the OPA. Badini confirmed that Tagro played a deleterious role in the negotiations and not just in terms of the SAGEM issue. According to Badini, Tagro and others like him (most notably National Assembly President Mamadou Koulibaly) continue to view Soro as a rebel and demean him, rather than show him the respect he is entitled to as Prime Minister. Badini noted that Soro had given up three members of his negotiating team (the Minister of Justice, the Minister of Tourism and the Minsiter of Solidarity and War Victims) in order to get rid of Tagro, but had succeeded. The next meeting of the OPA Evaluation and Monitoring Committee will be January 17, in Ouagadougou, but this time representatives of the international community will be invited as well.

17. (C) Comment: Embassy finds Badini,s assessment of the situation to be consistent with that of many observers in Abidjan. While important details still need to be sorted

out, the selection of SAGEM has raised hope that the identification process will indeed begin soon. If this happens and the process is done well, most eligible voters could indeed be documented by June 2008. Both the President and the political parties are shifting their attention to election preparations; we have noticed far less attention to the audiences foraines, for example, than one would expect given the high profile of the identity issue. Meanwhile, the government is slowly returning to the north and appears to be regaining control there. As it does, commerce and other normal activities are beginning to pick up. There is a palpable sense that things are moving forward, and mostly in the right direction, but anxiety about whether things will still look as good tomorrow remains quite strong.

NESBITT